

A young Canadian hitch-hikes way across Europe

By NEIL DICKIE

A lot of Canadians travel, particularly young Canadians. Many more want to travel. The standard place to go these days is Europe — a land far — far away and quite romantic, but civilized and comparatively well known to us. Most of our forefathers came to Canada from there and the simple appropriateness of reciprocating makes Europe an ideal travel destination.

But Europe isn't a simple destination — in the same way Canada isn't but in Canada we have the advantage of having only two languages to cope with while in Europe there are scores. Setting out for a European tour with good chances of really getting into it is not as simple as buying a return air ticket and hostel card.

It would probably take a good three years to get the feel of the continent. To just pass through the main "points of interest", which many travellers feel is their only socially acceptable choice, would take six months. European tours involve a lot of moving — and moving a lot, and this particularly on a low budget, is tough. So tough sometimes that the purpose of travel as geographical and cultural exploration is defeated.

Going as little as a hundred miles a day abroad forces a number of taxing but necessary decisions on the individual — hourly. There's the driving, which involves maintenance, or the thumbing, which can be cold (in winter) and tedious. And then there are the legion problems that crop up from being in unfamiliar territory — language, food, lodging, meeting others, meeting your emotional needs (very important) keeping clean and last but not least, "seeing" the area being travelled through. All these, day after day, for months can be pretty heavy.

I tried the conventional European tour, if the experience can be described at all in three words. I moved around Europe, the Mediterranean Islands and Israel last fall and winter and spring for about seven months. I took five hundred dollars. I came back with ten, and enough transcribable memories of places and people and feelings to write endlessly, and enough memories of things inexpressible to learn from and get off on for many more years.

Seeing others under the pressure of travelling was moving and educational. Canadians in particular. Travelling Canadians are different, they are proud and sometimes cliquish and often chauvinistic. They express by their attitudes abroad a very pertinent reflection (or perhaps indictment?) of the state of our national consciousness. One thing young travellers have in common is confusion; but Canadian confusion has in addition a uniquely political dimension. Canadians feel smugly superior culturally and politically. Especially in comparison to Americans (Americans often resent this). We somehow feel that we are — with our new banner and without publicized discrimination problems or war, generally — much better. And the attitude is displayed openly. If we aren't better, then foreigners, "will think we are".

For example flag waving. Almost every Canadian travelling abroad does it. Young freaks sew the flag to their pack sacks and jackets. Older tourists wear gold and enamel maple leaves on their

suits and dresses.

The rationale for the practise seems to lie behind the mistaken idea that Canadians are unusually beloved abroad, and that any European, young or old, upon sighting the maple leaf will instantly infer a positive stereotype upon the bearer; leading hopefully to preferred treatment.

I think that it's true that in Europe many years ago Canadians may have been favoured for the fact of their nationality — especially in countries that Canadian soldiers helped liberate e.g. the Netherlands. But by and large — tough luck though it may be; the image of the Canadian as Valiant, selfless liberator has faded.

Another unfortunate attitude held by many travellers from this country, especially younger ones, is that Europeans especially prefer Canadians to Americans, associating the latter largely with the postwar "ugly" American, with lack of style, surplus of capital etc. etc., and the former with their opposites. This belief is 99 percent false. Except in some places in Britain, Canadians are treated just the same as their neighbours to the south. Certainly nobody believes anymore that Canadians are poor. People all over Europe and the Middle East have relatives, daughters and brothers working in Canada and regularly sending back loads of money and shining tales of how rich our land is. And in comparison — we are really rich. So if you're planning an overseas trip expect to be taken as much in tourist shops as anyone else.

Interestingly enough, however, some myths about Canadians do circulate and mainly among the hitching set. Many American vagabonds seek out Canadians, thinking that we are "nice". Young inexperienced Americans have actually been known to masquerade as Canadians. This is probably because many of these people have hitchhiked in Canada and have found their experience here much less tense than in their homeland.

Personally I found North Americans to be pretty much alike, with the exception of a few really gross Kilroys I saw running loose. I remember in particular one young Iowan who upon describing indignantly being compelled by some locals to clean up the garbage and mess he had made from camping on their beach in Crete, said: "what's the use of living outdoors if you can't be a slob".

Another practical point against being a flag-waver lies in the fact that many veteran hitchers have strong political ideas about internationalism and brotherhood. Many of this group resent people who seem to glory in national pride, an attribute many people believe to smack of militarism and very low level consciousness. Canadians seem to be the only overtly nationalistic group on the road and many miss making friends with quite a few knowledgeable and interesting people because of it. When you're budget is two-fifty a day the information that these people can supply can be pretty valuable.

To make one concession however; displaying the flag can be useful if you're into meeting other Canadians. Fellow countrymen can be a comfort at times I admit; when you've just landed and are in the throes of culture shock. But after a time meeting mainly Canadians can be a drag. What

does one travel for anyway?

In Europe I met people from just about every province in Canada. Most Canadians on the road, I noticed were usually aged twenty to twenty-five and almost always were former university students. They probably were the largest single national group going. Why? Possibly because of more liberated educational attitudes, enabling them to "drop out" at will, and return, or feel little guilt if they drop the schooling system for good. Possibly because of low university costs — being less in debt. Possibly because of the fact that almost all young Canadians have been on the road here at one time or another due to easy-going attitudes about hitchhiking prevalent in Canada — possibly because of the Canadian experience of government subsidization of hostels in most cities, a policy which is usually conceded as being less meddlesome and less open to repressive policemen.

Unfortunately these young wanderers make up the group hardest hit when the maple leaf is hauled out. Because of the huge numbers seen on the roads, Europeans are starting to get quite tired of picking up people who are "going nowhere". When they spot you, they seem to figure that since you're likely going four thousand miles, the hundred they are going would be of much more help to a local student heading home to see his parents. And it's not hard to look like a European student.

Aside from Canadian Chauvinism etc., I think one other matter that contributes significantly to lower thumbing quality is the "path phenomenon", seen particularly in Winter; young hitchers all seem to go in one direction, South using main roads only.

But still the hitching is good, except in France and Spain (and Italy if you're male and without a girlfriend) where long hair is

frowned upon; just as good as in Canada or better. But it's far better in terms of both fuller experience and speed to get off the Auto bahns and Motorways and Autostrades and go down a few secondary roads.

In the face of all this, though, Canadians are I think doing o.k. abroad. They travel a lot, and widen horizons because of it sometimes. And they don't do that much damage. True, hotels are starting to spring up on beautiful clean old beaches, but without wanting to seem self righteous probably older, billfold wielding tourists are largely responsible. Sometimes even Canucks keep their heads together very well — creatively enjoying and living the whole thing quite successfully. And if that can happen once in a hundred times Canada, and perhaps Europe, will have been much better off for it.

Says Dean Wilson:

Student services improving all the time

By SUSAN MILLER

"The various aspects of student services have received excellent support from elected student officials," says Dr. Frank Wilson, Dean of Students for UNB. "I am pleased with the way things have gone in the past two years."

Dr. Wilson is the general administrator of Student Services on the campus. He also acts as Student Ombudsman, handling the complaints and problems of the student population. "Most of these grievances can usually be settled right in my office," he explained. One by one Dr. Wilson is going through his departments, improving them so they can better suit the needs of the student. Lately he has concentrated his efforts on the Student Health Service Centre, student counselling services, and off campus accommodations.

The Centre now runs clinics for two or three hours a day, several days a week in Tibbits Hall. "We are grateful to the local doctors who take the time to work at these clinics in co-operation with Dr. Myers and Miss Copp. But we need a full time medical director," said Dr. Wilson.

This summer UNB advertised across Canada for a medical director. "Eight reasonable applications have been received so far," said Dr. Wilson. "We will be screening these applicants this week. We feel it was a good response."

Dr. Wilson hopes to have the medical director in office by January 1. Once in office, he will organize afternoon and evening clinics, with part-time help from other doctors which will be financed through NB Medicare. He will be in charge of any admissions to the hospital, and subsequent hospital duty.

Another area of concern for Dr. Wilson is student counselling. There are three counsellors on staff now in Annex B, but Dr. Wilson hopes to have more members. "They do more than just offer personal advice," said Dr. Wilson. "They give guidance on career selection and study. They offer remedial reading and writing courses to those who require help."

John Edwards has been appointed as full-time officer for high school - university relations in the counselling field. "We feel we need

more contact with high school students for pre-university counselling. Helping the student to choose the proper faculty, and giving him an idea of what university life encompasses, may eliminate many problems for him later," explained Dr. Wilson. "We hope to accomplish this by bringing high school counsellors to the campus, and exposing them to various facets of university life by holding counselling seminars."

Dr. Wilson hopes to improve the off-campus accommodations service also. It had consisted mainly of cataloguing and constantly revising a list of accommodations by phoning the various landlords in the city and surrounding area. "I would also like to be able to assess the quality of these accommodations," said Dr. Wilson.

He feels that a zone map should be provided so the student can determine which locations would be suitable for him, eliminating

unnecessary calls. Phones should be installed in the office. "The student should be able to come in during the evenings or on the weekends, get a list, check the map, and phone for an interview right in the office," said Dr. Wilson.

As Dean of Students, Dr. Wilson also administers such services as the Placement Office, and the Scholarships and Loans Department.

Placement services are now handled by Canada Manpower. Dr. Wilson acts as liaison between the Manpower Agency and the university administration. Students register at Manpower in early fall to arrange for interviews with on-campus recruiting officers of various companies. Manpower also handles applications for summer employment.

"It is still too early to report on student loans," said Dr. Wilson. "However, \$177,000 worth of entrance scholarships have been awarded. There were 944 applications for the 210 scholarships."



Dean of Students Frank Wilson is optimistic about the future of student services. He said he's had a good reception in his new department.

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